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Increase of plague—Examination of rats—Haffkine virus.

Plague seems to be on the increase in this city, the cases having rapidly risen to 51 within seven days.

The diagnosis, except rarely, is made after death when the bodies go to the burning ghat or to the burying ground. The premises of the deceased are then visited to search for other suspicious cases, and the room which he occupied is thoroughly washed with bichloride of mercury solution. From the structure of the dwellings no gaseous disinfectant would be of any value.

Dead rats are daily collected in the infected regions to the number of 300 to 400 and some of them are examined for evidences of plague; none has thus far been found, but it may be interesting to note that most of the cases are in the neighborhood of the grain "godowns" or storehouses.

Haffkine virus is given to applicants, but I am told that only a very few have as yet applied for it, about 20, and all those who applied had received inoculation last year. Evidently they appreciated the protection and desired its continuance.

Reports from Bombay—Comparative statistics of plague mortality—Malta fever in Bombay.

Acting Asst. Surg. Edward H. Hume reports, February 6, as follows: The following figures show the progress of plague since the statement published in Public Health Reports on January 1, 1904. In that number the figures were given from September, 1896, to the end of October, 1903.

Summary of plague in Bombay Presidency from June 1 to December 31, 1903.

	Cases.	Deaths.
Total from June 1 to September 30, 1903.....	97,715	69,876
Total for October, 1903.....	66,437	49,335
Total for November, 1903.....	54,709	41,659
Total for December, 1903.....	42,433	32,329
Total from June 1 to December 31, 1903.....	261,294	193,199

These figures show that 73.94 per cent of the cases died, a mortality rate that is perhaps a little lower than is sometimes seen. It would appear as if the number of cases were steadily decreasing, month by month. This was true during December, but the figures for January, when published, will show a decided rise, as I have already reported in my weekly statement. The following is a summary of the plague and total mortality in Bombay city during January 1904:

Weekly summary, January, 1904.

[Population of Bombay, 776,006.]

	Plague attacks.	Plague deaths.	Total mortality.	Rate per 1,000 per annum.
Week ended—				
January 5.....	153	125	728	48.78
January 12.....	207	186	730	48.91
January 19.....	211	189	680	45.56
January 26.....	270	231	763	51.12
February 2.....		384	917	61.44

The figures for the week ended February 2 show that plague mortality is greatly on the increase, and that the total mortality has also rapidly risen. As you will see from the summary of deaths and births given in the Bombay Government Gazette, herewith inclosed, the cases of plague are found all over the city, nearly every section being involved. That section called Dongri suffers most severely, as usual.

Comparative statement of plague deaths in January for five years.

	1904.	1903.	1902.	1901.	1900.
Week ended:					
January 5	125	183	213	154	244
January 12	186	349	250	222	324
January 19	189	469	296	328	428
January 26	231	455	347	371	478
February 2	384	551

Mean for preceding five years, 497.

You will observe that although plague mortality is on the increase, as usual at this season, the comparative figures for previous years are encouraging, taking them week for week.

I have the honor to forward to you a copy of a pamphlet given me by Doctor Haffkine on "The Occurrence of Mediterranean or Malta Fever in Bombay," by Capt. George Lamb. The interest attaching to these cases reported is that it seems likely that a number of the unrecognized fevers of this Presidency may prove, on careful examination, to be cases of Malta fever. I am preparing a statement with regard to such cases of unrecognized fevers to send you. It is true, however, that Captain Lamb, now stationed at Kussauli, is making the serum test on all doubtful cases whose blood he can get hold of. A case developed at Miraj last month, with a temperature curve almost exactly like that of "Case 1, G. C.," in the accompanying pamphlet, and on testing the serum, it was found to strongly agglutinate the *Micrococcus melitensis*. The patient, an Englishwoman, has been invalided home at once.

Plague and smallpox.

	Deaths from plague.	Total mortality.	Rate per mille per annum.
Week ended—			
February 9, 1904	419	938	62.85
February 2, 1904	384	917	61.44
February 10, 1903	649	1,434	96.09
February 3, 1903	551	1,343	89.99
Mean of corresponding weeks in preceding five years	602	1,745	114.23

You will thus observe that although the plague and total mortality are greater than for any previous week since November, 1903, yet the figures are only a little more than half those representing the mean of the corresponding weeks of the five years preceding 1903.

There were 8 deaths from smallpox in the week ended February 9, 1904, as compared with 53 in the corresponding week last year.